AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all listing and versions of claims in this application.

Listing of Claims

1. (Original) A process for preparing acid formates in which

- a liquid stream I comprising formic acid and
- a liquid stream II comprising a metal formate

are prepared,

the liquid streams I and II are fed to a rectification column in such a manner that a higher or identical feed point to the rectification column is chosen for the liquid stream II than for the liquid stream I,

the liquid streams I and II are mixed in the rectification column, with water being removed overhead from the rectification column and

a bottoms stream comprising the acid formate is taken off from the rectification column,

which comprises the bottoms stream being produced as melt comprising less than 0.5% by weight of water.

2. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the content of liquid stream I of formic acid is at least 85% by weight.

3. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the content of liquid stream I of formic acid is at least 94% by weight~~, preferably at least 99% by weight~~.

4. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein the liquid streams I and II are aqueous streams.

5. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, wherein the bottoms stream comprises less than 0.3% by weight of water, preferably between 0.2 and 0.1% by weight of water, particularly preferably from 0.1 to 0.05% by weight of water.

6. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, wherein the bottom temperature in the rectification column is limited to a value below 135°C.

7. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the bottom temperature in the rectification column is limited to a value below 125°C.

8. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, wherein the feed point for the liquid stream II is chosen on or above the uppermost separation stage of the rectification column.

9. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1, wherein the ratio of the liquid streams II and I is chosen in such a manner that the molar ratio of metal formate from the liquid stream II and formic acid from the liquid stream I is in the range from 0.95 to 1.05, preferably 1.

10. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1, wherein the rectification column is fitted with separating internals of low pressure drop, preferably with ordered packings.

11. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 10~~ claim 1, wherein the number of theoretical plates of the rectification column is chosen from 5 to 15.

12. (New) A process as claimed in claim 3, wherein the content of liquid stream I of formic acid is at least 99% by weight.

13. (New) A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein the bottoms stream comprises between 0.2 and 0.1% by weight of water.

14. (New) A process as claimed in claim 13, wherein the bottoms stream comprises from 0.1 to 0.05% by weight of water.

15. (New) A process as claimed in claim 9, wherein the molar ratio of metal formate from the liquid stream II and formic acid from the liquid stream I is 1.

16. (New) A process as claimed in claim 10, wherein the rectification column is fitted with ordered packings.